

THE THEATRE

THE PLAYGOER

On Some Performances Now Current in New York.

Henrietta Crossman is one of the best of our best comedienne; but she does not have the best fortune in finding plays that are suited to her, or in securing for them, when found, an adequate representation. "The Real Thing," in which she is appearing at Maxine Elliott's Theatre, is a neat little comedy, an attractive little comedy, indeed, but it is almost spoiled in the last act, and by no less an influence than Miss Crossman's own. In two acts she exhibits her delightful talents in the "real thing"—that is to say, in real comedy. In the third act she drops into broad farce, even into burlesque. For two acts her Jess Lorraine is a gentleman; after that a termagant. In two acts she is witty, wise and well bred; in the last act she is stupid, foolish and bad mannered.

Jess Lorraine would not have changed like that, and could not if she would. The author, Catherine Chisholm Cushing, does not indicate any such riotous transformation of character in the leading part of the piece. Miss Crossman, for reasons not apparent, makes the regrettable change. She shrieks like a fishwife, and dashes like a circus acrobat, and throws the character from the heights of charm to the depths of the ridiculous. Perhaps she has a notion in that act that she must play for points. But such points! They bring the piece down with a run. In place of keen satisfaction there is a cold plunge of disappointment. Miss Crossman does not seem to see that Mrs. Lorraine, whatever the disturbance in her emotions and however spurred by vexation, should in the third act be the same woman that she was in the first and second—that she cannot be otherwise. Jess was a clever woman, worldly wise and with a big heart, fine, attractive, a lady of delights. But the Jess of the third act is not at all a woman whose memory would be cherished, through years of separation, by a man of sense. She would, far more likely, be placed under bonds to keep the peace. Why does an actress with the rare gifts which Miss Crossman undoubtedly possesses thus misinterpret character, divert opportunity and spoil a really distinguished piece of high comedy acting?

Rose Stahl's Maggie Pepper is far from being as interesting a person as her Patricia the Chorus Lady. How much of this difference in degree of interest may be due to Mr. Charles Klein and how much to Miss Stahl herself is a question which may not be settled by any amount of discussion. Perhaps Miss Stahl's range is narrow and not long; but shall any one say that of Mr. Klein? The play, nevertheless, speaks for itself, and does not speak very well for itself. It is too obviously an arrangement of scenes built to exploit a star. Slight as it is, it holds a prodigious amount of sentimentality, and a superfluity of unlikeliness to any life excepting life as it may be—and too often is—conceived from the stage rather than from the world in which we all live. Everybody in these days has something to do with department stores, either by personal contact or through mail orders. Everybody, therefore, may be interested in seeing on the stage a representation of the private offices of a department store, of the life which a dramatist imagines may be lived therein. Allow this much for choosing a department store setting for the adventures of a staff. The public is caught at the start by an exhibition of the unfamiliar side of a familiar "institution." But the department store in "Maggie Pepper" is as much like the real thing as was the store in Dixie's "Adonis" many years ago and has about as much relation to actual life. The idea that a gay young sprig, the son of the house, after a notorious course of dissipation abroad, could "learn the business" by walking through the establishment, either with or without a silk hat, and by engaging the confidences of shopgirls, even of an exceptionally capable one, rescue the firm from imminent bankruptcy, make it the most successful concern in its line in New York and in a single year, win among experienced business men the title of "The Napoleon of the Dry Goods Business" is too absurd to delude even the occasional purchaser of a paper of pins. The "business characters" in this business piece are well enough known to the stage, however strange they may be in the actual world of affairs. But dramatists are quite safe, it seems, in toying with details. If the public happens to know it, it doesn't care very much. The doddering cashier, the wooden-headed manager, the comic drummer are types that ceaselessly haunt the stage in "plays" as well as in "musical comedies."

Maggie Pepper in the department store is much more interesting than Maggie Pepper out of it. The department store scenes are to this play what the stage dressing room scene was to "The Chorus Lady." But in the office scene Maggie is less interesting than in the stock room. This may be because, in spite of the theatrical traditions, we care less for Maggie Pepper risen in life, instructed by books on grammar and etiquette, than for the eruder girl in the stock room. It is in the humbler grooves that Miss Stahl is most entertaining. Her finer airs leave the spectator cold. Some rather rigid mannerisms have fixed themselves upon her, and these are less alluring on the rising or risen creature than on the disappointed shopgirl. On the whole there is too much of Margaret Pepper and too little of Maggie.

But the Harris Theatre is comfortable and a joy to the eye. The ugly old Hackett has been transformed into one of the most charming playhouses in New York.

The adapted advertisement of the page. "When a new book is published, read an old one!" I am, every little while, inclined to supplement with, "When a new play is announced, go to the Hippodrome." In the vast spaces of that astounding house one may well seek refuge from much that passes elsewhere.

JULIAN ELTINGE.
In "The Fascinating Widow," at the Liberty Theatre.

MARGUERITE CLARK.
In "Baby Mine," at the Manhattan Opera House, week of September 25.

ANNE MEREDITH, ALLAN POLLOCK AND VIRGINIA HAMMOND.
In "What the Doctor Ordered," at the Astor Theatre.



MME. SIMONE.
French actress, who has come to appear in Bernstein plays.

SCENE FROM "THE COUNTRY BOY."
At the Grand Opera House, week of September 25.

THE COMING WEEK

COMEDY AND DRAMA.

Academy of Music.—The regular stock company will present Bronson Howard's old play, "The Banker's Daughter," during the coming week.

Astor Theatre.—A. E. Thomas's new comedy, "What the Doctor Ordered."

Belasco Theatre.—Revival of "The Concert" by Leo Ditrichstein from the German of Herman Haur.

Bijou Theatre.—Cyril Scott, in Harrison Rhodes's comedy, "Modern Marriage," a play based on a German idea.

Century Theatre.—Last week of "The Blue Bird." Maurice Maeterlinck's fairy play.

George M. Cohan's Theatre.—On Monday night the first performance of George M. Cohan's new musical piece, "The Little Millionaire," with the author in the leading part.

Collier's Comedy Theatre.—Lee Wilson Dodd's "Speed," with Oza Waldron and Orrin Johnson. Shows the results of the automobile craze.

Criterion Theatre.—Haddon Chambers's "Fanny By," a play of real dramatic interest.

Daly's Theatre.—On Thursday night, September 28, the first performance here of George Broadhurst's play, "Bought and Paid For." In the cast are Charles Richman and Julia Dean.

Emmott Theatre.—The always charming John Drew, in "A Single Man."

Gaiety Theatre.—Rupert Hughes's "Excuse Me," a comedy of travel in a Pullman car, this week enters upon its seventh month.

GEORGE M. COHAN.
In "The Little Millionaire," at the Cohan Theatre, Monday, September 25.

Collier's Comedy Theatre.—Lee Wilson Dodd's "Speed," with Oza Waldron and Orrin Johnson. Shows the results of the automobile craze.

Criterion Theatre.—Haddon Chambers's "Fanny By," a play of real dramatic interest.

Daly's Theatre.—On Thursday night, September 28, the first performance here of George Broadhurst's play, "Bought and Paid For." In the cast are Charles Richman and Julia Dean.

Emmott Theatre.—The always charming John Drew, in "A Single Man."

Gaiety Theatre.—Rupert Hughes's "Excuse Me," a comedy of travel in a Pullman car, this week enters upon its seventh month.

PRINCESS RAJAH.
At the Colonial Theatre.

IRENE FRANKLIN.
At the Alhambra Theatre.

Collier's Comedy Theatre.—Lee Wilson Dodd's "Speed," with Oza Waldron and Orrin Johnson. Shows the results of the automobile craze.

Criterion Theatre.—Haddon Chambers's "Fanny By," a play of real dramatic interest.

Daly's Theatre.—On Thursday night, September 28, the first performance here of George Broadhurst's play, "Bought and Paid For." In the cast are Charles Richman and Julia Dean.

Emmott Theatre.—The always charming John Drew, in "A Single Man."

Gaiety Theatre.—Rupert Hughes's "Excuse Me," a comedy of travel in a Pullman car, this week enters upon its seventh month.

ROSE LA HARTE.
In "Around the World," at the Hippodrome.

Collier's Comedy Theatre.—Lee Wilson Dodd's "Speed," with Oza Waldron and Orrin Johnson. Shows the results of the automobile craze.

Criterion Theatre.—Haddon Chambers's "Fanny By," a play of real dramatic interest.

Daly's Theatre.—On Thursday night, September 28, the first performance here of George Broadhurst's play, "Bought and Paid For." In the cast are Charles Richman and Julia Dean.

Emmott Theatre.—The always charming John Drew, in "A Single Man."

Gaiety Theatre.—Rupert Hughes's "Excuse Me," a comedy of travel in a Pullman car, this week enters upon its seventh month.



ANNIE YEAMANS.
At Keith & Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre.

GABY DESLYS.
At the Winter Garden.

MAUDE FULTON.
At Hammerstein's Victoria.

LONDON DRAMA

Overworked City Men—Domestic Miscalculations.

London, September 13.
Two theatres have reverted to domestic drama with thoughtful satire underneath comedy. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, who is essentially didactic even in his farcical moods, has taken up in "The Ogre" the problem of the management of a headstrong family. A financier who is forced by business losses to let his London house and to live economically in a suburban lodge discovers that while he has been encrossed with City affairs his young second wife, his two daughters and his son have got out of hand. His shallow, silly wife has become hopelessly extravagant and is carrying on a desperate intrigue with the president of the Five Years' Marriage Society; one daughter has written an advanced sex novel and the other has determined to break away from school, and the idle, spendthrift son has fallen in love with a vulgar music hall artist. The Ogre does not lack occupation in his enforced retirement from business. By putting his foot down firmly and by proving that when it comes to downright tramping men's boots are heavier than women's he regains control of his house.

It is the clash of wills that makes a good drama, and there is not a little of it in this entertaining comedy. The wife revolts against retrenchment, discharges the servants, attempts to starve the Ogre into submission, smashes a picture with a hammer, goes off for a motor drive with a brainless rake and plans an elopement. The husband, with the help of a shrewd gardener, obtains a chop and a tankard of ale from an inn and enjoys a hearty luncheon when the rest of the family are hungry. He takes the hammer from the rebellious wife's hands and nails to the wall a pair of white hunting breeches as a token that he is master of his own house. He easily blocks the elopement when the wife's admirer finds out that the supply of petrol has run short and takes a train for Switzerland alone. In the end the Ogre triumphs all along the line by playing the part of Petruchio and snapping the whip vigorously. The penitent wife agrees to remain with him in the country; one daughter accepts a convent suit and renounces her advanced ideas; the other consents to return to school; and the puppyish son is separated from the music hall artist and is allowed to go to Canada to redeem the errors of his youth.

Some of these figures and details would become farcical if Sir George Alexander, by his dexterity and lightness of touch, did not contrive to keep the play close to the line of pure comedy. His impersonation of the patient, good-humored, determined husband is a delightful bit of genuine comedy work, without a trace of exaggeration or a single unnatural tone or gesture. The only thing to match it in artistry is the eccentric comedy of Mr. Sydney Valentine as the gardener, with stony glare and contempt for woman as the helpless property of man. Miss Kate Cutler makes the pleasure-loving wife at once a human figure and the sort of woman who is to be met every day in London drawing rooms. The suffragette friend of the family, the sex novelist and the scapegrace son are common types in modern society. The satire of the piece is well salted and wholesome and the acting worthy of the traditions of the St. James's Theatre. Altogether, it is the best example of comedy with a purpose which Mr. Jones has written since "The Liars."

Mr. Alfred Sutro is another master of the comedy of everyday life. He works out his social problems with more subtlety than Mr. Jones and manages his stage situations with a closer approach to French skill; and his dialogue is always natural and his humor sparkling and spontaneous. In his new play for Wyndham's Theatre, "The Perplexed Husband," he has introduced seven characters, and the action occupies three days in a mansion near Regent's Park. The story is told with economy of stroke and is a sharply etched sketch from real life. The hero, like Mr. Jones's Ogre, is a City man, and he is not so fully preoccupied with business affairs as to be unconscious that things are not going well at home. Mr. Gerald du Maurier is the bewildered husband, and when he chooses to exert himself he is one of the most agreeable comedians of the English stage; there are so many characteristic gestures and facial expressions, and there is so much individuality in his style of acting. Associated with him in this stage production are artists with mannerisms and methods of their own, such as Mr. Lyall Swete, with his saccharine smile, Miss Henrietta Watson, with her sharp, decisive interpretation of character, and Miss Athene Seyler and Miss Enid Bell, with their talent for impersonating the victims of infatuation.

The cause of disturbance in the City man's household is his wife's infatuation on the subject of woman's position in modern life. A charlatan, whom she hails as her master and guide, has proclaimed the gospel of intellectual life and spiritual freedom and obtained complete ascendancy over her mind. The husband's campaign for liberating the credulous wife from the domination of a trickster and his dupes is conducted with diplomatic skill. He makes a serviceable ally of a pretty girl who wants to go to Athens and excites the jealousy of the wife. When the accomplice carries off the charlatan the wife's eyes are opened and her affection for her devoted husband returns. The composition of the play is excellent. The theme is fresh and the treatment subtle.

The satire of this comedy follows the classic models of Molière. "Les Précieuses Ridicules" was a comedy of manners directed against the follies of contemporary society, and it was followed at a later period by "Les Femmes Savantes," in which the affectations and vanities of pedants, charlatans and silly women were satirized. L. N. F.